CLARK COUNTY HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM STUDY
Task Force Meeting #8
6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 13, 2007
Public Service Center, 6th Floor Hearings Room
1300 Franklin Street
Vancouver, WA 98660

Members present:
Doug Ballou (Clark County Neighborhoods)
Bob Byrd (Identity Clark County)
Bob Knight (Clark College)
Dick Malin (Vancouver NHA West)
Kanathan Mom (Youth Commission)
Ross Montgomery (Vancouver NHA East)
David Rowe (C-VAN User, C-TRAN Citizen Advisory Committee)
Todd Horenstein (School Transportation)

Staff:
Dale Robins (RTC)
Bob Post (URS)
John Cullerton (URS)
Sharon Kelly (URS)
Jack Gonsalves (PB)
Cathy McCague (EnviroIssues)
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)
Kalin Schmoldt (JLA)

Members absent:
Eva Cobb (Clark County Leadership)
Steve Horenstein (Downtown Vancouver Employer)
Gail Bauhs (Human Service Transportation)
Lora Caine (Friends of Clark County)
Kathy McDonald (C-TRAN Rider)
Mike Bomar (Building Industry Association)

Purpose of meeting:
- Review the corridor technical analysis for SR 14 and SR 500 Corridors.
- Describe the evaluation approach for comparing within corridors and among corridors.

Welcome/Committee Business
Review agenda – Jeanne Lawson explained that tonight's meeting would focus on the SR 14 and SR 500 corridors with information on the remaining corridors to follow. She emphasized that the meeting was oriented towards providing information to inform future recommendations by the Task Force.

Approve of September 17, 2007 meeting summary – There were no comments on the summary.

Schedule – The Task Force confirmed that Monday, January 21, and Monday, February 18, would be fine for subsequent meetings despite the holidays on those dates.

Public Involvement Report – Cathy McCague updated the group on the online survey. The survey asks participants to allocate tokens to the HCT features that they value the most. Currently, "Convenient stations and park & rides" has received the most tokens, with (2) "Faster transit system" and (3) "Predictable transit travel time" as the other popular choices. McCague noted that they have been receiving many comments in support of LRT and emphasizing access

to downtown Portland. Other destinations of interest include Vancouver Mall, Clark College, Battle Ground, and Brush Prairie. Comments emphasize that the service should be reliable and easy to use. The website has received 1,800 more hits than in September. The increased interest is likely due to a recent email inviting participation in the survey as well as the recent activities of the CRC project. Another email announcement will precede the next Sounding Board meeting. Dale Robins offered to distribute the PI report via email.

Lawson described the Steering Committee fact-finding trip to learn about Eugene's BRT system. The trip also included city and county commissioners, as well as policy staff from C-TRAN, Vancouver, and RTC. Jon Schleuter, director of the Portland area Westside Economic Alliance, presented information about Washington County's work with transit and commuter rail.

Ross Montgomery asked about opportunities to visit Eugene and look at the BRT system. Gonsalves said that the system is free to ride from the Eugene Transit Center in downtown Eugene. Sharon Kelly noted that there is a park and ride at the Springfield end.

Dick Malin noted that CRC featured a brief video of the Eugene BRT system. Robins offered to place a copy of the video on the Task Force website.

David Rowe asked whether the Washington County Commuter Rail system was on schedule and under budget. Lawson said that the project was on schedule but did not know the status of the budget.

Lawson explained that information on the remaining corridors will be presented at the January meeting. The February meeting will include a summary of the corridor information and will seek a recommendation from the Task Force to take to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will then make a recommendation to the RTC board and development of a system plan will begin.

Public Comment

Dave Howard, Vice Chair of the Lincoln Neighborhood Association, noted several positive experiences with transit in Atlanta and Boston. He noted a recent neighborhood meeting focused on the issue of safety on MAX. He emphasized the importance of addressing safety and security concerns in the course of the internal HCT conversation and when reaching out to the community. He noted that any lack of clarity regarding security issues will not build confidence in the system and he suggested that allowances for dedicated transit security be built into any assumptions for the transit system budget.

SR 14 Corridor Technical Analysis

John Cullerton explained that they have been studying how HCT might work in the SR 14 and SR 500 corridors. The findings will allow comparisons between the modes in each corridor and the corridors themselves.

Review design concepts – Cullerton noted the evaluation context for the SR 14 Corridor. An SR 14 alignment would tend to function as a speed oriented corridor with an emphasis on commuter trips, while a Mill Plain alignment would emphasize access to local services. Some modifications

have been made to the alignment maps based on feedback from the Task Force and Steering Committee. A rail option was not developed for Mill Plain because of a steeply graded section.

Technical Summary, Corridor Evaluation – Cullerton noted that the traffic analysis findings showed no major traffic impediments.

Kelly described the land use analysis methodology. Analysis is based off of existing land use as well as land uses outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Parcel data within ½ mile of stations along the corridor produced data on existing land use, employment, and household data for each alternative. Cullerton noted that Mill Plain contained a greater mix of land uses and station area coverage. SR 14 had less coverage because the corridor had fewer promising areas for stations.

Todd Horenstein asked whether the use of a ½ mile radius was standard. Cullerton said that the ½ mile methodology is suggested by FTA. Kelly noted that ¼ mile constitutes about a five minute walk. She noted that station placement can affect the area served, and that a more detailed analysis would consider the actual serviceable area more closely.

Cullerton noted that Mill Plain has higher density than SR 14 in terms of employment, residential, and commercial areas. Bob Byrd asked if there is a specific density threshold required by federal funding guidelines. Kelly said that higher density and more mixed use will typically rank higher while low density tends to rank poorly. However, she noted that the numbers for these alignments give only a relative indication and indicate only that SR 14 would have a harder time competing than Mill Plain. Downtown is currently not being considered as part of these corridors so as to emphasize differences between facilities. Including downtown would add to the density and employment numbers for each corridor in the ultimate analysis.

Malin asked whether there was a sense of how the corridors compare with the greater Portland area. Kelly said it was too early to say during this conceptual phase.

Bob Knight asked about the data used in the analysis. Kelly explained that existing data was based on the 2000 census and the 2030 projection was based on the current Comprehensive Plan. She noted that FTAA funding analysis considers land use projections. Lawson noted that the Steering Committee had already discussed how federal funding relates to land use. Kelly offered to bring back further information about how density and other factors affect potential funding.

Cullerton explained that ridership is based on a funnel shaped travel-shed that feeds trips into the corridor. Daily person trips consider every trip taken during an average weekday. The 2030 projection estimates 1.01 million trips in the SR-14 corridor, of which ¼ are work trips. Doug Ballou asked how the percentage of work trips by mode is forecasted. Cullerton explained that the model considers the relative travel times and costs of travel by transit and the road system. Downtown Vancouver has the highest percentage of transit use because of factors such as parking cost, density of services, and employment. Each transit mode can also be rated as faster or slower than others.

Ross Montgomery asked whether the ridership model is unique to Clark County. Cullerton said that RTC keeps the transportation model using standard software. The federal government also

wants consistency in the ridership forecasts for all of the entities applying for funding. Some of the projections are based on observations elsewhere.

Dave Rowe asked whether transit ridership would increase if fuel prices rose significantly before 2030. Cullerton said that ridership estimates would increase, but noted that they are currently using the same projections as others who compete for funding.

Todd Horenstein asked where the employment figures come from. Robins said the figures were from the Comp Plan, and a subset of employment figures for the county.

Cullerton showed the transit mode share for the SR 14 travel shed. He noted that the figures on transit mode share include the entire transit system within the corridor (not just HCT.)

Dick Malin asked whether they should be looking at the same modes within each alignment for comparison purposes. Cullerton explained that they were trying to create a sense of how each corridor would perform with limited time and resources. The performance of the corridor can usually be separated from the performance of the mode. Lawson also noted that certain grades along the Mill Plain corridor made the use of rail modes impractical.

Bob Knight asked how the student population is being considered. Cullerton explained that the model treats students as a specialized population and does consider the trips and locations of facilities within the county as well as the propensity of student populations to use transit. Lawson clarified that while the land use modeling only considers the ½ mile swath around the corridor, the ridership considers the entire funnel that feeds the corridor.

Cullerton noted that the HCT mode ridership figures reinforce the data from the mode-split information regarding more trips staying with the county on BRT full on Mill Plain. BRT-Lite is a slight improvement over local bus on Mill Plain. Ballou asked about current transit ridership on Mill Plain. Cullerton estimated 2,000 trips for an average weekday.

Jack Gonsalves explained the cost methodology. The use of the term *capital* includes all costs. Costs are broken into cost-categories. He explained the rough estimates for infrastructure costs and noted that "soft" costs involve A&E and design contingency. The design contingency considers that little is initially known about the corridor. As design advances, the contingency value decreases so that at 100% of design the contingency should be zero.

BRT on Mill Plain is projected as costing more because of the higher number of stations and intersections. The cost for BRT-Lite includes bypass elements for some congested areas.

Operating costs include ongoing costs. Cullerton explained that the cost estimates were focused only on the HCT facility, unlike estimates for the CRC that considers various improvements outside of the CRC corridor. In this case, an assumption is made that the C-TRAN network is the same for each concept. Also, cost estimates have been estimated based on equal capacities at peak hours and consider frequency of service and cost per revenue hour (which includes fixed costs such as maintenance and administration.) Cost figures came from Tri-Met, C-TRAN, and Lane Transit District (Eugene). Robins noted that while the peak ridership figures were the same

for BRT and LRT, BRT was capable of adjusting its service to more closely match demand and could therefore reduce costs. Cullerton explained that the lower cost of LRT on SR 14 was due to the increased speeds during peak hours, even though ridership was less during off-peak hours.

Doug Ballou asked about combining capital and O&M costs to see cost per rider. He requested the ability to see a per-unit comparison. Cullerton said that while the FTA uses such a methodology, its complex to estimate at this point. Lawson emphasized that the costs were not intended as final or accurate; rather they are only intended as estimations for the purpose of comparison.

SR 500 Corridor Technical Analysis
Cullerton explained that the SR 500 alignment was similar in character to SR 14 and its faster speeds. There is likewise a similar dichotomy between the SR 500 corridor and Fourth Plain, with the latter emphasizing service to adjacent land uses. The streetcar was not fully evaluated for the corridor although costs were estimated.

Review design concepts – Cullerton noted the addition of viaduct structures west of Andresen because of Burnt Bridge Creek and to pass over Andresen and Thurston for the SR 500 alignment. The Fourth Plain alignment shifted to use Fort Vancouver Way and McLoughlin.

Technical Summary, Corridor Evaluation – Cullerton noted no major impediments for either corridor.

Dick Malin noted a previous interest in creating a loop from SR 500 to the airport. Cullerton said that the HCT Study was largely an outgrowth of that discussion. SR 500 is looking like a long-distance/high speed alignment that is being compared to different uses on Fourth Plain. Lawson said that the system plan will integrate the different pieces.

Jack Gonsalves noted that SR 500 has very little available right of way. Twenty three percent of the length would be on a viaduct structure that reduces the size of the alignment footprint but increases costs for BRT and LRT.

Doug Ballou asked about construction impacts associated with the alignments. Gonsalves said they would be trying to retain existing streets as much as possible for the sake of drainage and traffic control.

Ross Montgomery asked whether the Task Force will be asked whether the price for LRT on SR500 is prohibitive. Gonsalves noted that more specific price projections will follow the selection of promising corridors.

Todd Horenstein asked whether LRT could be built within the existing right of way on SR 500. Gonsalves said that the alignment could run in the median, but that would make stations harder to build. He noted that once shoulders are widened, the use of the median is width-neutral. Robins noted the additional costs for rebuilding interchange structures. Horenstein asked whether it would be cheaper to redo the road network to accommodate the needs of LRT. Gonsalves said

that the use of elevated structures would make costs predictable, while redoing the road network could pose traffic control costs.

Cullerton noted that the relationship between BRT and LRT for the SR 500 Corridor is different than for the SR 14 Corridor. In this case BRT-Full is less expensive in terms of operating costs because BRT on SR 500 is faster than LRT, and offsets LRT's peak-hour advantage. Even so, the differences weren't huge.

Horenstein asked where the streetcar would stand in comparison to the other modes. Cullerton explained that the performance would depend on whether it functions in an access or speed oriented capacity.

Evaluation – Compare among Corridors

Dick Malin noted that there were no allowances for security and noted the recent problems in Oregon. Cullerton said that the assumptions were based on the current operations of MAX and C-TRAN bus. Future assumptions for security costs could be higher than today, though the current information is all that is available. Lawson questioned whether considering costs for security would help differentiate between the modes. Malin expressed concern that security issues on the MAX trains would be different than for buses. Bob Post said that while bus security is not currently getting the same level of attention, it is inaccurate to say that LRT has more security issues than buses do. Ballou noted security issues associated with transit centers. Post noted that the hourly costs do reflect the current levels of security for TriMet, including cameras, their own security forces, and supplemental security from local law enforcement. He agreed that planning for future security concerns is important.

Bob Byrd asked to see a side-by-side comparison of the modes for each alignment. Cullerton noted that they would produce a Consumer Reports style evaluation, but offered to create a version of the comparison spreadsheet that shows the findings side-by-side.

Ross Montgomery noted that Portland collects data from employers about where people live. He asked whether they could pinpoint where the Clark County residents who work in downtown Portland live. Cullerton said that they could fine-tune the maps to show which parts of the county interact more with downtown Portland. Robins noted that the model uses rough geographic areas, but is fairly accurate. Cullerton noted that downtown Vancouver jumps out as a strong market while the Vancouver Mall markets are harder to serve because there isn't the same accumulation of services as in Downtown. He suggested thinking about such secondary centers in the context of the overall system: as markets that might evolve into being served by transit.

Malin noted that Clark College would be a good target market. Robins said that Clark College travel behaviors are known from a previous survey and are reflected in the model.

Cullerton explained that the comparison table will try to summarize information into high/medium/low categories and will work with both quantitative and qualitative assessments. He reiterated that the Task Force is being asked to identify the most promising elements to carry forward into a plan, not to select a single mode or alignment from each corridor. The decision is not black and white and the recommendation will vary depending on which market type is being

served. This decision will also depend on policy and value assessments. Gonsalves emphasized that they were not currently trying to rule options out.

Bob Byrd clarified that the Task Force was being asked whether they have a preference for commuter or local access oriented corridors. Cullerton agreed, noting the question of whether each corridor is best thought of as oriented towards moving people longer distances or as serving the development within the corridor. He noted that technical information can't provide the answers. Byrd noted that each option lends itself to different uses. Cullerton noted that the distinctions between the I-5 and I-205 corridors will be clearer.

Doug Ballou clarified that they would seek preferred alignments followed by preferred modes. Lawson explained that they would produce some kind of Consumer Reports table based on the goals and objectives and backed up with data. She noted that when a corridor is ultimately developed it will go through a NEPA process that will require revisiting all reasonable alternatives over again. Gonsalves compared the current process to comparative shopping and evaluating which trade-offs are preferable. Lawson emphasized that data alone won't make the decision: policy will dictate what is most important. The information will back-up the support for the policy and will ultimately look at what the first project will be. Robins noted that the System Study level will look at which corridors and which modes make the most sense. That process may only determine whether there will be exclusive right of way or shared right of way for a corridor.

Malin said that he hoped there would be subsequent opportunities to hear from the people at the table regarding their hopes and thinking.

Wrap-up

Cullerton noted that information will be brought back on the other corridors as well as Chelatchie Prairie in January.

Lawson noted that the November 19th meeting has been cancelled to allow more time for a complete corridor analysis. Following the January and February meetings, information will need to be collected from the CRC for the system plan. The subsequent Task Force meeting could occur in June.

Rowe asked when the CRC will select a Locally Preferred Alternative. Robins said that the staff recommendation will come in February with an agency decision in June. Lawson offered to bring updated CRC coordination information to the next meeting.

Close

November 19, 2007 Meeting is canceled

Next Meetings:

January 21, 2008 - Elections

February 18, 2008 - PSC 6th floor Training Room